USDA

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

**Office of the Chief
Information Officer**

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TO: All Service Center Agency and OCIO Employees

FROM: Scott Charbo   JUN 18 2003
Chief Information Officer

Thomas C. Dorr   - 6/23/03
Under Secretary
Rural Development

J. B. Penn
Under Secretary
Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Mark Rey   JUN 23 2003
Under Secretary
Natural Resources and Environment

SUBJECT: Service Center Agencies IT Convergence - Update # 1

On July 23, 2002, the Secretary sent a letter to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that contained a plan to integrate information technology (IT) activities of the Service Center Agencies needed to operate and maintain the Common Computing Environment (CCE) for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Rural Development (RD) mission area.

In a subsequent letter on August 9, 2002, to the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services, the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Under Secretary for Rural Development, the Secretary assigned this activity to the Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Department. This integration includes a number of the IT staffing from these three organizations into a new organization under the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

The Service Center Agencies Information Technology (SCA-IT) Convergence will be the terminology used in the future representing the merging of the IT Infrastructure staffing needed to support the infrastructure of these three organizations.

Since the distribution of these letters, following are some of the activities that have been proceeding:

- Briefed USDA senior policy officials
- Briefed Congressional committee staffs
- Assigned an OCIO executive leadership for transition (Richard Roberts)

- Established an interagency core transition planning team
    - OCIO – Richard Roberts (chairperson)
    - FSA – Nadim Ahmed and Kristine Hines
    - NRCS – Shelia Greene and Lyle Rich
    - RD – Carol Henson and Jack Zechman
    - Partnership Liaison – Donald Gearing

- Requested one state IT representative from each agency
- Development of function statements – in draft
- Development of a communication plan – in progress
- Requested a waiver from the Chief Financial Officer for time to develop a competitive sourcing plan like all agencies to meet the goals required by OMB.
- Instituted an OCIO review process on filling or moving any IT position in these agencies.
- Instituted an OCIO review process on any IT contracts exceeding $25,000
- Developed an organization chart, functional statements, and potential staffing plan through a teaming approach with the core transition planning team, Service Center Modernization Initiative-IT team leaders, and a state representative requested from each agency.
- An independent review and validation of the organizational proposal has been completed and is being updated.

The overall functions to be transferred to this new OCIO organization will be all state IT positions supporting the infrastructure and part of the IT positions from National Headquarters and key centers supporting the infrastructure of these agencies. The goal is to accomplish this transfer as soon as personnel timings can be achieved. A project plan with tentative timelines has been developed and will be refined with input from Human Resource specialists of the three agencies.

While SCA-IT Convergence is being planned and implemented, many shared activities in the Service Center Modernization Initiative – Information Technology (SCMI-IT) must proceed as a team effort in the field. These include, Microsoft XP migration and the telecommunications upgrade. Some state leaders have already approached this by operating their IT staffs as a converged operation to assist in delivery of needed services to the business areas. These activities are essential to the delivery of business functions for all three agencies. Therefore, please work as a team - as if all the IT staffs were a converged SCA-IT organization.

A web site has been established www.itconv.usda.gov/itconv to convey information and for responses to frequently asked questions with answers. An email mailbox has also been established faq@sca.itconv.usda.gov to send questions electronically regarding SCA-IT Convergence.